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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO HEAD OF OFFICE IN
YEREVAN AMBASSADOR SERGEI KAPINOS

Post is authorized to make the following statement at the
July 16 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna.

Begin Text:

Thank you, Madame Chairwoman.

We would like to welcome Ambassador Kapinos back to the
Permanent Council, and thank him for his comprehensive report
on the Office,s activities in the past year. We remain
impressed by the work the Office is doing to bring police
training institutions in line with international standards
and to combat trafficking in persons.

We also commend the Office,s creation of a community
policing pilot program, and encourage the Office to ensure
the sustainability of this center by monitoring progress and
providing mentoring on a regular basis. We believe that
establishment of more such projects in other Yerevan
districts and around the country would positively affect the
safety and security of the Armenian people.

At the same time, we want to highlight the need for the
Office to focus on a few critical areas where the OSCE has a
clear mandate and a capacity to help government authorities
fulfill OSCE commitments in the areas of police assistance,
good governance and anti-corruption, reform of the judiciary
and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental
freedoms, including freedoms of the media and assembly.

In our view, the Office should direct its attention in the
second dimension to practical, results-oriented work in the
vital area of good governance, including anti-corruption and
transparency of government administration. Economic
development work, while important, can be undertaken more
effectively and appropriately by other organizations.

We support the Office,s continued focus on election reform,
in particular assisting the Armenian authorities to implement
the recommendations stemming from the February 2008 OSCE
election observation mission. The electoral complaint
process needs particular attention, as does the overall
implementation of election-related legislation necessary for
a transparent, level playing field.

The Office should intensify its active support to pluralism
of media, particularly alternative media such as online news
sites. The Office could also play a useful role in assisting
the authorities to review amendments to the Law on TV and
Radio in order to facilitate compliance with OSCE commitments
and ensure that the planned digitalization switch in 2010
does not hinder fulfillment of those commitments. The United
States also joins the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the
Media in condemning recent instances of violence against
Armenian journalists, and calls for effective, transparent
investigations and prosecutions of the perpetrators of these
acts. We support your office,s continued monitoring and
intervention in these cases of violence against the media
until they are resolved.

Despite some improvements to legislation on freedom of assembly, implementation has been lagging. We would therefore support further OSCE assistance in this area.

We also support the Office's efforts to strengthen the government's judicial reform programs, in particular by focusing attention on training of defense attorneys and judges on international judicial standards and case law.

The United States values its relationship with Armenia and stands ready to work together with the Office and the government and people of Armenia to assist Armenia in advancing its democratic development toward becoming a more stable, prosperous country.

Thank you, Madame Chairwoman.

End text
CLINTON